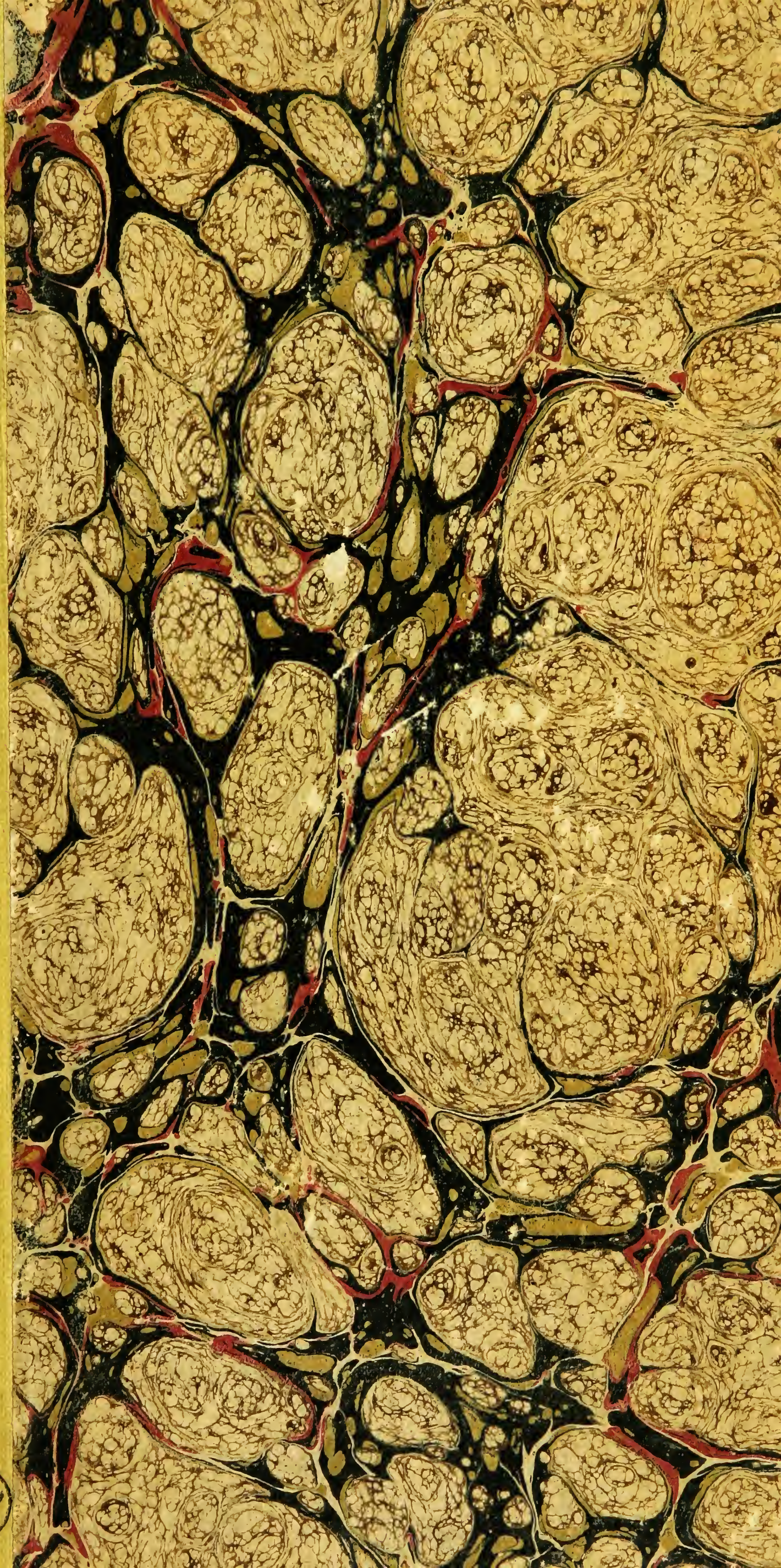


REYNOLDS Peter Bell

1819



PR
5221
R5P4
1819f

Cornell University Library

FROM THE INCOME OF THE
FISKE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE BEQUEST OF

Willard Fiske

Librarian of the University 1868-1883

1905

A.284459

23/10/14.

3184

PETER BELL.

A

LYRICAL BALLAD.

(By J. Hamilton Reynolds)

John Hamilton Reynolds

"I do affirm that I am the **REAL** Simon Pure."

Bold Stroke for a Wife.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY,

93, FLEET STREET.

1819.

A

174

A.284459

1810

PREFACE.

IT is now a period of one-and-twenty years since I first wrote some of the most perfect compositions (except certain pieces I have written in my later days) that ever dropped from poetical pen. My heart hath been right and powerful all its years. I never thought an evil or a weak thought in my life. It has been my aim and my achievement to deduce moral thunder from buttercups, daisies*, ce-

* A favourite flower of mine. It was a favourite with Chaucer, but he did not understand its moral mystery as I do.

“ Little Cyclops, with one eye.”

Poems by ME.

landines, and (as a poet, scarcely inferior to myself, hath it) “such small deer.” Out of sparrows’ eggs I have hatched great truths, and with sextons’ barrows have I wheeled into human hearts, piles of the weightiest philosophy. I have persevered with a perseverance truly astonishing, in persons of not the most pursy purses ;—but to a man of my inveterate morality and independent stamp, (of which Stamps I am proud to be a Distributor) the sneers and scoffings of impious Scotchmen, and the neglect of my poor uninspired countrymen, fall as the dew upon the thorn, (on which plant I have written an immortal stanza or two) and are as fleeting as the spray of the waterfall, (concerning which waterfall I have composed some great lines which the world will not let die.)—Accustomed to mountain

solitudes, I can look with a calm and dispassionate eye upon that fiend-like, vulture-souled, adder-fanged critic, whom I have not patience to name, and of whose Review I loathe the title, and detest the contents.—Philosophy has taught me to forgive the misguided miscreant, and to speak of him only in terms of patience and pity. I love my venerable Monarch and the Prince Regent*. My Ballads are the noblest pieces of verse in the whole range of English poetry : and I take this opportunity of telling the world I am a great man. Mr. Milton was also a great man. Ossian was a blind old fool. Copies of my previous works may be had in any numbers, by application at my publisher.

* Mr. Vansittart, the great Chancellor of the Exchequer, is a noble character:—and I consecrate this note to that illustrious financier.

Of PETER BELL I have only thus much to say : it completes the simple system of natural narrative, which I began so early as 1798. It is written in that pure unlaboured style, which can only be met with among labourers ;—and I can safely say, that while its imaginations spring beyond the reach of the most imaginative, its occasional meaning occasionally falls far below the meanest capacity. As these are the days of counterfeits*, I am compelled to caution my readers against them, “ for such are abroad.” However, I here declare this

* The White Doe of Rylstone is not of my writing. If it be a serious imitation of my style, I venerate the author ; but if it be meant as a joke against me,—I cannot but weep at its remorseless cruelty. I neither know the tragic *Doe*, nor am I acquainted with the tragic *Buck*,—though both these poetical creatures have of late piteously moaned over their buffetings of fortune—“ But let the stricken *deer* go weep,” as Bacon philosophically hath it.

to be the true Peter ; this to be the old original Bell. I commit my Ballad confidently to posterity. I love to read my own poetry* : it does my heart good.

W. W.

N. B. The novel of Rob Roy is not so good as my Poem on the same subject.

* “ Often have I sigh’d to measure
By myself a lonely pleasure,
Sigh’d to think I read a book
Only read perhaps by me.”

Poems. i. 249.



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

PETER BELL.

1.

It is the thirty-first of March,
A gusty evening—half past seven ;
The moon is shining o'er the larch,
A simple shape—a cock'd-up arch,
Rising bigger than a star,
Though the stars are thick in Heaven.

2.

Gentle moon ! how canst thou shine
Over graves and over trees,

With as innocent a look
 As my own grey eye-ball* sees,
 When I gaze upon a brook?

3.

Od's me! how the moon doth shine:
 It doth make a pretty glitter,
 Playing in the waterfall;
 As when Lucy Gray doth litter
 Her baby-house with bugles small.

4.

Beneath the ever blessed moon
 An old man o'er an old grave stares,
 You never look'd upon his fellow;
 His brow is covered with grey hairs,
 As though they were an umbrella.

* My eyes are grey. Venus is said to have had grey eyes. Grey eyes please me well,—being, as a friend of mine finely saith, “beautiful exceedingly.”

5.

He hath a noticeable look*,
 This old man hath—this grey old man;
 He gazes at the graves, and seems,
 With over waiting, over wan,
 Like Susan Harvey's † pan of creams.

6.

'Tis Peter Bell—'tis Peter Bell,
 Who never stirreth in the day;
 His hand is wither'd—he is old!
 On Sundays he is us'd to pray,
 In winter he is very cold ‡.

* “A noticeable man with large grey eyes.”

Lyrical Ballads.

† Dairy-maid to Mr. Gill.

‡ Peter Bell resembleth Harry Gill in this particular:

“His teeth they chatter, chatter, chatter.”

I should have introduced this fact in the text, but that Harry Gill would not rhyme. I reserve this for my blank verse.

7.

I've seen him in the month of August,
 At the wheat-field, hour by hour,
 Picking ear,—by ear,—by ear,—
 Through wind,—and rain,—and sun,—and shower,
 From year,—to year,—to year,—to year.

8.

You never saw a wiser man,
 He knows his Numeration Table;
 He counts the sheep of Harry Gill*,
 Every night that he is able,
 When the sheep are on the hill.

9.

Betty Foy—*My* Betty Foy,
 Is the aunt of Peter Bell;

* Harry Gill was the original proprietor of Barbara Lewthwaite's pet-lamb; and he also bred Betty Foy's celebrated poney, got originally out of a Night-mare, by a descendant of the great Trojan horse.

And credit me, as I would have you,
 Simon Lee was once his nephew,
 And his niece is Alice Fell*.

10.

He is rurally related ;
 Peter Bell hath country cousins,
 (He had once a worthy mother)
 Bells and Peters by the dozens,
 But Peter Bell he hath no brother.

11.

Not a brother owneth he,
 Peter Bell he hath no brother ;
 His mother had no other son,
 No other son e'er call'd her mother ;
 Peter Bell hath brother none.

* Mr. Sheridan, in his sweet poem of the Critic, supplies one of his heroes with as singularly clustering a relationship.

12.

Hark ! the church-yard brook is singing
 Its evening song amid the leaves ;
 And the peering moon doth look
 Sweetly on that singing brook,
 Round* and sad as though it grieves.

13.

The little leaves on long thin twigs
 Tremble with a deep delight,
 They do dance a pleasant rout,
 Hop and skip and jump about
 As though they all were craz'd to night.

14.

Peter Bell doth lift his hand,
 That thin hand, which in the light

* I have here changed the shape of the moon, not from any poetical heedlessness, or human perversity, but because man is fond of change, and in this I have studied the metaphysical varieties of our being.

Looketh like to oiled paper ;
 Paper oiled,—oily bright,—
 And held up to a waxen taper.

15.

The hand of Peter Bell is busy,
 Under the pent-house of his hairs ;
 His eye is like a solemn sermon ;
 The little flea severely fares,
 'Tis a sad day for the vermin.

16.

He is thinking of the Bible—
 Peter Bell is old and blest ;
 He doth pray and scratch away,
 He doth scratch, and bitten, pray
 To *flee* away, and be at rest.

17.

At home his foster child is cradled—

Four brown bugs are feeding there* ;
 Catch as many, sister Ann,
 Catch as many as you can †
 And yet the little insects spare.

18.

Why should blessed insects die ?
 The flea doth skip o'er Betty Foy,
 Like a little living thing :
 Though it hath not fin or wing,
 Hath it not a moral joy ?

19.

I the poet of the mountain,
 Of the waterfall and fell,

* I have a similar idea in my Poem on finding a Bird's Nest :—

“ Look ! *five* blue eggs are gleaming there.”

But the numbers are different, so I trust no one will differ with the numbers.

† I have also given these lines before ; but in thus printing them again, I neither tarnish their value, nor injure their novelty.

I the mighty mental medlar,
 I the lonely lyric pedlar,
 I the Jove of Alice Fell,

20.

I the Recluse—a gentle man *,
 A gentle man—a simple creature,
 Who would not hurt, God shield the thing,
 The merest, meanest May-bug's wing,
 Am tender in my tender nature.

21.

I do doat on my dear wife,
 On the linnet, on the worm,
 I can see sweet written salads
 Growing in the Lyric Ballads,
 And always find them green and firm.

* See my Sonnet to Sleep :—

“ I surely not a man ungently made.”

22.

Peter Bell is laughing now,
 Like a dead man making faces ;
 Never saw I smile so old,
 On face so wrinkled and so cold,
 Since the Idiot Boy's grimaces.

23.

He is thinking of the moors,
 Where I saw him in his breeches ;
 Ragged though they were, a pair
 Fit for a grey old man to wear ;
 Saw him poking,—gathering leeches.*

24.

And gather'd leeches are to him,
 To Peter Bell, like gather'd flowers ;

* See my story of the Leech-gatherer, the finest poem in the world,—except this.

They do yield him such delight,
 As roses poach'd from porch at night,
 Or pluck'd from oratoric * bowers.

25.

How that busy smile doth hurry
 O'er the cheek of Peter Bell ;
 He is surely in a flurry,
 Hurry skurry—hurry skurry,
 Such delight I may not tell.

26.

His stick is made of wilding wood,
 His hat was formerly of felt,
 His duffel cloak of wool is made,
 His stockings are from stock in trade,
 His belly's belted with a belt.

* “ Ah ! ” said the Briar, “ blame me not.”

Waterfall and Eglantine.

Also,—

“ The Oak a Giant and a Sage,
 His neighbour thus address'd.”

27.

His father was a bellman once,
 His mother was a beldame old;
 They kept a shop at Keswick Town,
 Close by the Bell, (beyond the Crown),
 And pins and peppermint they sold.

28.

He is stooping now about
 O'er the grave-stones one and two;
 The clock is now a striking eight,
 Four more hours and 'twill be late,
 And Peter Bell hath much to do.

29.

O'er the grave-stones three and four,
 Peter stoopeth old and wise;
 He counteth with a wizard glee
 The graves of all his family,
 While the hooting owlet cries.

30.

Peter Bell, he readeth ably,
 All his letters he can tell;
 Roman W,—Roman S,
 In a minute he can guess,
 Without the aid of Dr. Bell.

31.

Peter keeps a gentle poney,
 But the poney is not here;
 Susan who is very tall*,
 And very sick and sad withal,
 Rides it slowly far and near.

32.

Hark! the voice of Peter Bell,
 And the belfry bell is knelling;

* “*Long Susan* lay deep lost in thought.”

The Idiot Boy.

It soundeth drowsily and dead,
 As though a corse th' "Excursion" read;
 Or Martha Ray her tale was telling.

33.

Do listen unto Peter Bell,
 While your eyes with tears do glisten :
 Silence ! his old eyes do read
 All, on which the boys do tread
 When holidays do come—Do listen !

34.

The ancient Marinere lieth here,
 Never to rise, although he pray'd,—
 But all men, all, must have their fallings;
 And, like the Fear of Mr. Collins*,
 He died "of sounds himself had made."

* See what I have said of this man in my excellent supplementary *Preface*.

35.

Dead mad mother,—Martha Ray,
 Old Matthew too, and Betty Foy,
 Lack-a-daisy ! here's a rout full ;
 Simon Lee whose age was doubtful*,
 Simon even the Fates destroy."

36.

Harry Gill is gone to rest,
 Goody Blake is food for maggot ;

* I cannot resist quoting the following lines, to shew how I preserve my system from youth to age. As Simon was, so he is. And one and twenty years have scarcely altered (except by death) that cheerful and cherry-cheeked Old Huntsman. This is the truth of Poetry.

" In the sweet shire of Cardigan,
 Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall ;
 An old man dwells—a little man—
 I've heard he once was tall ;
 Of years he has upon his back,
 No doubt, a burthen weighty ;
 He says he is threescore and ten,
 But others say he's eighty."

These lines were written in the summer of 1798, and I bestowed great labour upon them.

They lie sweetly side by side,
 Beautiful as when they died ;
 Never more shall she pick faggot.

37.

Still he reads, and still the moon
 On the church-yard's mounds doth shine ;
 The brook is still demurely singing,
 Again the belfry bell is ringing,
 'Tis nine o'clock, six, seven, eight, nine!

38.

Patient Peter pores and prosés
 On, from simple grave to grave ;
 Here marks the children snatch'd to heaven,
 None left to blunder " we are seven ;"—
 Even Andrew Jones* no power could save.

* Andrew Jones was a very singular old man.—See my Poem,
 " I hate that Andrew Jones—he'll breed," &c.

39.

What a Sexton's work † is here,
 Lord! the Idiot Boy is gone;
 And Barbara Lewthwaite's fate the same,
 And cold as mutton is her lamb;
 And Alice Fell is bone by bone.

40.

Stephen Hill is dead and buried,
 Reginald Shore is crumbling—crumbling,
 Giles Fleming—Susan Gale—alas!
 Death playeth in the church-yard grass
 His human nine-pins—tumbling—tumbling.

41.

But Peter liveth well and wisely,
 For still he makes old Death look silly,
 Like those sage ducks of Mrs. Bond,
 Who, not of killing over fond,
 Turn a deaf ear to dilly, dilly.

† “ Let thy wheelbarrow alone, &c.” See my poem to a Sexton.

42.

And tears are thick with Peter Bell,
 Yet still he sees one blessed tomb ;
 Tow'rds it he creeps with spectacles,
 And bending on his leather knees,
 He reads the *Lakeiest* Poet's doom.

43.

The letters printed are by fate,
 The death they say was suicide ;
 He reads—"Here lieth W. W.
 Who never more will trouble you, trouble you :"
 The old man smokes who 'tis that died.

44.

Go home, go home—old Man, go home ;
 Peter, lay thee down at night,
 Thou art happy, Peter Bell,
 Say thy prayers for Alice Fell,
 Thou hast seen a blessed sight.

He quits that moon-light yard of skulls,
And still he feels right glad, and smiles
With moral joy at that old tomb;
Peter's cheek recals its bloom,
And as he creepeth by the tiles,
He mutters ever—"W. W.
Never more will trouble you, trouble you."

HERE ENDETH THE BALLAD OF PETER BELL.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESSAY.

I BEG leave, once for all, to refer the Reader to my previous Poems, for illustrations of the names of the characters, and the severe simplicity contained in this affecting Ballad. I purpose, in the course of a few years, to write laborious lives of all the old people who enjoy sinecures in the text, or are pensioned off in the notes, of my Poetry. The Cumberland Beggar is dead. He could not crawl out of the way of a fierce and fatal post chaise, and so fell a sacrifice to the Philosophy of

Nature. I shall commence the work in heavy quarto, like the *Excursion*, with that “old, old Man,” (as the too joyous Spenser saith.)—If ever I should be surprised into a second edition of my whole Poems, I shall write an extra-supplementary Essay on the principles of simple Poetry. I now conclude, with merely extracting (from my own works) the following eloquent and just passage (my Prose is extremely good) contained in the two volumes lately published, and not yet wholly disposed of:—

“A sketch of my own notion of the Constitution of Fame has been given; and as far as concerns myself, I have cause to be satisfied.—The love, the admiration, the indifference, the slight, the aversion, and even the contempt, with which these Poems have been received, knowing, as I do, the source within my own mind, from

which they have proceeded; and the labour and pains which, when labour and pains appeared needful, have been bestowed upon them,—must all, if I think consistently, be received as pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression though widely different in value;—they are all proofs that for the present time I have not laboured in vain; and afford assurances, more or less authentic, that the products of my industry will endure.”

Lyrical Ballads, Vol. i, p. 368.

Fleet Street, May, 1819.

TAYLOR AND HESSEY

HAVE JUST PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING WORKS.

LECTURES on the ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS.

Delivered at the Surry Institution. By WILLIAM HAZLITT, 8vo. Price 10s. 6d. boards.

LECTURES on the ENGLISH POETS, delivered at the Surry Institution. By WM. HAZLITT, 8vo. *Second Edition*. Price 10s. 6d. boards.

CHARACTERS of SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS. By WM. HAZLITT. 8vo. *Second Edition*, Price 10s. 6d. boards.

"This is a very pleasing book—and we do not hesitate to say, a book of very considerable originality and genius.—What we chiefly look for in such a work is a fine sense of the beauties of the author, and an eloquent exposition of them; and all this, and more, we think, may be found in the volume before us."

Edinburgh Review, No. 56.

THE VISION, or HELL, PURGATORY, and PARADISE, of DANTE ALIGHIERI. Translated by the Rev. H. F. CARY, A. M. 3 pocket volumes, price 12s. boards.

"Of all the translators of Dante with whom we are acquainted, Mr Cary is the most successful; and we cannot but consider his work as a great acquisition to the English reader. It is executed with a fidelity almost without example; and though the measure he has adopted conveys no idea of the original stanza, it is perhaps the best for his purpose, and what Dante himself would have chosen if he had written in English, and in a later day."

Edinburgh Review, No. 58.

ENDYMION: A Poetic Romance. By JOHN KEATS. Handsomely printed in 8vo. price 9s. boards.

THE IDENTITY of JUNIUS with a DISTINGUISHED LIVING CHARACTER established. Including the SUPPLEMENT, consisting of Fac-Similes of Hand-writing, and other Illustrations. *The Second Edition*, corrected and enlarged. Printed uniformly with Woodfall's edition of Junius, and accompanied with a fine Portrait of Sir PHILIP FRANCIS, and five Plates of Handwriting. 8vo. price 14s. boards.

"That it proves Sir Philip Francis to be Junius we will not affirm; but this we can safely assert, that it accumulates such a mass of circumstantial evidence, as renders it extremely difficult to believe he is not; and that, if so many coincidences shall be found to have misled us in this case, our faith in all conclusions drawn from proofs of a similar kind may henceforth be shaken."

Edinburgh Review, No. 57.

* * The SUPPLEMENT may be had separately, price 3s.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

